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The
American Historical Review

AMERICAN HISTORY AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY¹

IN every field of modern scientific study there is a body of workers with a certain sense of companionship and a feeling of identity of interests and enthusiasm. Intellectual isolation is almost unknown. New discoveries and contributions to knowledge do not come unheralded from some unknown corner of the thinking world; almost everything—if we know the real scientific processes behind it—we find to be the product of general intellectual movement, in which there has been division of labor, in which there have been leaders and specialists, but also co-operation and intelligent sympathy. History is less thoroughly organized as a field of research than any one of the natural sciences and less than at least one of the social sciences; but the sense of fellowship, the common understanding of aims and ideals, the feeling that we are working together and that ideas are common property, the historical investigators possess in marked degree. No one of us can be very far along in his study of any period without finding that others are beside him or perhaps in accomplishment a parasang in advance. Symmetry and good sense in historical product, showing appreciation of the course followed and the stages reached, are wrought out, not alone by the use of bibliographies and by the application of critique, but by the effect of companionship and the generous interchange of personal opinion.

For this end, this sense of community, the American Historical Association has been consciously and unconsciously working for thirty years. We have the right to congratulate ourselves on results: the spirit of helpfulness and generous appreciation, the knowledge of our individual tastes, capacities, and failings, the fact that book and monograph, as they appear, are the result of combined as well as varied historical study and devotion.

¹ Annual address of the president of the American Historical Association, delivered at Chicago, December 29, 1914.

Some such thoughts as these must come to one called upon for a brief period to preside over this body; and I find myself almost unable to go forward and address my audience without this foreword of appreciation, without for a moment calling the Association to self-consciousness. Probably I am also influenced by the feeling of timidity, which, I imagine, would come to almost any of us endeavoring to speak with some show of assurance to a body of historical scholars, of whose learning and depth of interest he is fully aware. For one must realize, because of the homogeneity I have spoken of, and this interplay of ideas, how difficult it is to be novel, fresh, and illuminating. One can, however, cherish the consolation that if he keeps well within the bounds of the safe and well known, he will at least show he is not far from the life and thought of others.

I propose to discuss the subject of American democracy as a point of view in the writing of American history, and to present my own reactions as to what is central and most fundamental in any wide survey of the last three centuries as we look back upon them. To-day, perhaps more than at any time during our lifetime, we are looking hopefully and fearfully at the whole democratic régime—on the one hand encouraged by a profound belief that a nation, acknowledging the principle that the masses of men should have free opportunity to work out their own destiny, must in the end satisfy the actual needs of men and not the ambitions of privilege; on the other doubting whether mass government, with its heedlessness, wastefulness, incoherence, and absence of foresight, can actually maintain itself, and not only continue to live here in America amid the perplexities and the formidable economic and social trials that beset us, but go on and manifest itself as a conquering world-force. We question with a new foreboding whether in the awful, soul-destroying competition for racial and national aggrandizement, the state which is not led by the trained mind, the scientific expert, the calculating statesman with assured authority, can hold its own and give free scope to the great essential economic and spiritual longings, the blind desires of the multitude, which we have supposed, by the philosophy of democracy, to be the safest and surest impulse for the establishment of human good. We feel called on, as never before, to take stock calmly and going back over our history to estimate the accomplishments and the failings of the American unmethodic system of progress.

But in any such study, not much can be done without recognizing that history has to do with things of the spirit, for fundamentally democracy is a spirit and not merely a form of government. The

historical investigator is ever seeking for facts and events, too well content possibly if he succeeds in finding them and in making some sort of connection with what went before and after. This must on the whole be his daily task; for if we would come to see long lines of tendency and continuing causes and if we wish to watch the interlacing of influences, which appear to flow from varying and different sources, we cannot know the course of the lines without fixing the points, and influences to be known need to be studied in detail and viewed first of all in comparative isolation. But of course history deals with more than events, and with more than the mere outward actions of men; it has to do with ideals and purposes, with the spirit and character of man. And I have sometimes thought in recent days that history was too much afraid of itself, too fearful of anything reaching out into the philosophy of the unseen, as if the unseen were not real. Has history nothing to do with things of the spirit, and has it become materialistic and materializing? Has it no eye for the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things unseen? Has it in and of itself no mission beyond cataloguing? Has it become in itself or will it become an unspirited or dispirited industry? Is not the scientist who writes of the mechanistic conception of life more nearly a ministering spirit than the maker of catalogues of events, more nearly humanistic than the historian who dreads even psychology and fails to reckon with *mores* and folk-ways, lest he venture and be lost in the unpathed wilderness of sociology? The scientist has no fear: the chemist dealing deftly with atoms, the physicist handling unseen force and giving it name and quality, the astronomer looking into infinite space and speaking in terms beyond the finite—they have no fear of philosophy or metaphysics or of all-embracing reality; they would see things face to face. They will not call their faith religious, but they are consciously reaching after the causative, the unifying, the universal, and the eternal. But history is afraid, industrial, materialistic, satisfied with product, keeping accounts, priding itself on its full storehouses.

American history has more to do than to hunt facts or catalogue occurrences. Above all other histories it has the task of feeling character and divining living spirit. For America has been conscious of a purpose and a place and a particular destiny. It may well have had a meaning of which it did not know; but beyond other nations or bodies of men it had, and it thinks it has, a mission. Whatever America may really mean, it has believed that its feet were rightly set on a path leading to human improvement, and, though the mean-

ing of our own life is far beyond our own consciousness, our history must be studied fundamentally with this fact in mind. Even to-day the man on the street has no trouble in finding phrases to express his belief in what we are and should be, and it has always been so; indeed, the newest comer to our shores often seems to know better than does the scholar or the man of big affairs what we are and whither we should go. Below the discontent and the bitterness of social strife is some sense that we are failing to live up to the ideals we still sometimes put into words. And thus in all we write or think of the past, we cannot wisely omit the hopes and enthusiasms which have been animating the nation; we cannot close our eyes to the fact that there have come changes, moods, developments of temperament, and that these manifestations of intangible character and spirit are the things best deserving evaluation. We may well question whether a nation can ever become truly great without intense self-consciousness and self-appreciation, and, however closely the historian may cling to ideals of scientific objectivity, he may well believe that one duty of historical study and writing is to help make a nation conscious of its most real self, by bringing before it its own activity and the evidences of its own psychology.

In the interpretation of American history, and especially I think constitutional history, writers have plainly been influenced by their own environments. And so any historical work you or I may do is likely to be colored, whether or not we intentionally select a particular prism through which to view the past. Bancroft's great epic, with its paean of exultation over escape from bondage, was a very natural expression of the buoyant, self-confident democracy of the Jacksonian era. The great thought which dominated the time was that, from the heroic deeds of the Fathers, came independence from the mother-country, independence and liberty. If to-day Bancroft's attitude toward his subject seems provincial, despite his heroic attempt to review in passing the events of European history, if it seems rhetorical and over subjective, his work will be of lasting import because he was permeated by the atmosphere of his generation and because he grasped or sought to grasp the spirit of America. After Bancroft's earlier volumes were written, there came a period in which the interesting questions were those of union and slavery. While sectionalism prospered or seemed to prosper, there was a fixed determination to maintain union; nationalist and sectionalist alike viewed the Constitution as a solemn arrangement, a fundamental engagement and provision for union—I do not mean *the* Union or unity,

but something more than isolation. To one set of readers, debaters, and writers the union meant creation of a certain national authority; to the others it meant conservation and preservation of local interest; all agreed that its purpose was to harmonize, protect, and make compatible different interests and varying sectional qualities. The great hope of the time was to prevent disintegration. Calhoun, who can hardly be banished from the field of history any more than from the domain of practical politics or metaphysics, came in his desire for union to see the Constitution as an arrangement for protecting local autonomy, almost as a contract between sections.

Through these years before the Civil War and for some time thereafter slavery came forth as the great matter of discussion, and men read constitutional treatises and examined events of the past to see what light they threw on slavery. Only very recently have we broken away from the tendency to see in the debates at Philadelphia a struggle over slavery; the temptation was strong, almost irresistible, to find North and South pitted against each other, and so arrayed because one was free, the other slave. We needed to tell ourselves and others that the line did not run between North and South, but between little states and big, and that there were lines connecting men of similar social and economic interest. Looking at the days after the Constitution was adopted, we were sure to find what we looked for and more than the fact, not economic and social cleavage and interest or other reasons for division into parties or cliques, but sectionalism with slavery lurking in the background only to be seen by the unerring eye of the man who knew that slavery caused the Civil War, and knew that the Civil War was the only determining, all-meaning event in American annals because it freed the black.

Just as at earlier days we read the history of the colonies with our eyes steadily fixed on Bunker Hill and Yorktown, so for some time after the Civil War men read and wrote remembering that there had been a war fixing the political character of the Union. Von Holst's great treatise was written with a steady eye on Secession. Himself a child of 1848, an enthusiast for union and for liberty—the well-ordered, obedient kind of liberty which a German knows how to admire—he never understood Jefferson or Jackson, while Louisiana, Florida, the Bank, and the War with Mexico, were for him chiefly episodes in constitutional construction and slavery, leading up to South Carolina, Jefferson Davis, and Lincoln.

If we select Von Holst for special mention because his work was able and his volumes many, we need also to remember that most of us have done the same and that only in very recent days have we

come to see that the war was not the end but was itself an episode in a long train of events and causation. I mean to present no objection to anyone's seeking to discover the causes of anything susceptible of being explained by the past; the long succession of incidents and changing conditions lying in the years before the Civil War or of any other war, as far as they explain that event, are properly chosen and held up to view; but I am pointing out that we select and interpret with something central and determinate in our minds, and that American history has been written and read, in considerable degree at least, because men wished to explain some things which were of immediate and fresh interest to them and which *now* do not appear final and all-important.

Many of us are even now looking out upon the field of constitutional history as a branch and only a branch of economic history. One can find no fault with the desire to trace the development of economic conditions, or with the wish to see how economic forces have played through political institutions or toyed with constitutions and parties. The story is there for some one to tell, convincingly if he can and truthfully if he is able to see the light. The ever present danger is the old one—the temptation to find in the past the present, not simply conditions out of which the present came, and to find just what we expect to find and not the almost infinite variety of motive and interest and of personal and social character which changed and changed again under new environment and responded to new suggestion. We are in imminent hourly danger of finding in our midst, and working as one of our own pawns, the economic man, that well-known servant of another science, whom we have all been taught to treat with distant and decent respect as the property of a neighbor whose work we admire but would not imitate.

Probably I am myself the creature of a day, illustrating present moods and visions alone, when I suggest that, primarily, constitutional construction, union, slavery, war, conflicting emotions for states' rights or centralized authority, class interest, economic movement, all bear primarily on the problem which America still faces and on the ideal which, consciously held or not through the whole course of our history, will be looked upon as determining America's place in the world. Certainly we have not yet passed out of the position where we are considered and where we consider ourselves as testing an experiment in popular government and in the development of democratic possibilities. In these days, it is true, our institutions are subjected to the pitiless fire of criticism and are no longer held up to the world as in themselves idols demanding incense and worship;

but probably even the unthinking man never seriously held that the institutions were the sole things intrinsically all-important. We fell, however, into that manner of speech and still use it; for but yesterday I read in a thoughtful magazine article the statement and the prophecy that if the church did not survive and give nourishment to our spiritual life, our institutions would surely fall. What indeed would it profit a man if he gain his own soul and lose his institutions? And yet, behind all this manner of speech there has been from the beginning a conviction that forms of government only symbolized and illustrated something deeper and more worth while.

Is it to distort history again to imagine that the historian of the distant future is bound to inquire whether the experiment in self-government, with all the attendant ideals and motives, really worked out to make men bigger, better, stronger, and higher; to inquire what the struggle was, what the difficulties, what the progress and the retrogression, what war, expansion, factories and machinery, constitutions and courts, food and physical environment, the city and the frontier, all working together, meant and how they operated in the development of men; to inquire whether the ideals, peculiarly represented in governmental institutions, were really masterful and worked out into actual improvement? If this be distortion I must make the best of it; for whether the historians of the future have the problem or not, we certainly are to-day interested in what has gone before us, primarily, I believe, with this experiment in self-government in mind, with all that it involves, or with all that we find to be wrapt up in it—social and individual justice, right as God gives us to see the right, and human condition. Secondary to all this must be placed political and sectional conflict and the din of industrial strife. Amid all this tumult, all the play and impact of human energy, did the ideals of self-government hold firm? How were they altered, through what phases did they pass, how did transient moods or changing problems modify them and affect their onward course? If we have such questions in mind, the stress and emphasis on events of the past will be differently laid in any wide and general view of American history. We remember the words of Henry Adams describing America—spiritual America—at the beginning of the last century:

European travellers who passed through America noticed that everywhere, in the White House at Washington and in log-cabins beyond the Alleghanies, except for a few Federalists, every American, from Jefferson and Gallatin down to the poorest squatter, seemed to nourish an idea that he was doing what he could to overthrow the tyranny which the past had fastened on the human mind.²

² *History*, I. 175.

Naturally the events of history must be established by research, and often, if not always, established without any reference to present conditions; a period must be studied in order that all the forces working through or in it may be appreciated and that the characteristics of the succeeding period may be known. I make no plea for the rejection of everything that has no conceivable bearing on the development or workings of American self-government. Everything that made America what it is deserves consideration. Before the eyes of all of us, however, rises the figure of the woodsman of a century ago. As he stood looking out upon the still unconquered continent, seeing visions of human progress, determined to break down the tyranny inherited from the past, believing in a wide and noble freedom, he appears to us the very genius of American history; we can never ignore him for there in very truth he stood and thus in very fact he thought. How far have his dreams come true? With face turned toward the future and with mind filled with characteristic American optimism and confidence, he little knew the difficulty of winning bodily liberty and soul freedom for man, little realized that new tyrannies would take the place of older ones and that chains of his own forging would clog his every step.

A hurried review of certain periods and movements in our history will serve to illustrate my meaning. The new interpretation and the new choice of incidents and points of attention in colonial history emphasize the importance of the colonies as portions of the English empire. The study is part of the effort to understand the expansion of England, or it is part of the general world-history of imperial order and organization. Few problems of the present day are of more absorbing interest than just this problem of imperial expansion and control, for it is perplexing the souls of men everywhere; it is perplexing our souls as we think of the Philippines, Cuba, and the dark cloud on our southern boundary. Moreover, even this study of imperial order and practice is of moment for the student of American constitutional history, for out of the practical working system of the English empire came the system of political organization which we call the American federal state; the composite English empire, with practical distribution of powers between governments, was the parent of the composite United States, the first great federalized empire based upon law and not on opportunism. All this is of great importance; and yet the older point of view, if in some respects provincial and inadequate, is vitally sound at heart; for, though colonial history was often written in earlier days as if the colonies were not colonies, it was written with the idea that histor-

ical tradition, habits of mind, and social and political institutions were forming to come down into the later United States. Most of the older history was written as if the end in view was independence and revolution, or union without even reference to the character of the union; but there was some recognition of the fact that what was done in colonial times had a longer and wider meaning than this. However, over-refinement and over-sensitiveness about viewpoints are needless; colonial history will continue to be viewed as the background of our own history, and, as we more and more come to see it aright, we can better understand the origin of the new self-conscious experiment in democracy, to which was attributed the virtues and vices of democratic government, and from which have been continually drawn evidences to demonstrate the folly of trying to be at once honest, orderly, and democratic. We must remember that, if we have in our later days judged ourselves by other standards and lost sense of what we are and mean, Europe has not ceased for one moment in the last hundred and fifty years to watch us—in war, diplomacy, industrial growth, education, and religion—as a democracy.

Anyone resenting and rejecting the avenue of approach which I have suggested, can hardly help being converted temporarily by considering the Revolutionary period which began about the outbreak of the old French war and ended with the Constitution of the United States. This was a time in which institutions, principles, and character were forming. The important thing for us is what men did and above all what they thought, because out of their doing and thinking came much of the America we know. And yet the Revolution is still spoken of as if it were the war; the days from the peace of 1763 to the surrender at Yorktown are still commonly spoken of as if the great and only thing was independence; whereas in reality both the war and independence were incidents and opportunities in the development of American ideals and ideas, in the unfolding of institutions which formulated or partly expressed principles. The problem which confronted England in the middle of the eighteenth century was whether she could maintain and establish on a permanent basis a far-reaching empire; practically, whether she could reconcile general integrity of the empire with local freedom, and whether, holding the whole as a real political thing, she could grant the opportunity for the developing vigor of younger England across the sea. She failed, because, using all the power of legalistic argument gathered from the stores of purely insular experience, she insisted upon the theoretical acknowledgment of

centralization. The whole controversy enabled America to work out through failure and success the principle of federalism, the establishment of the federal state. All this period is of immense interest, then, because there came out of it a type of imperial organization—one of the two or three signal contributions of America and England to the world of statesmen and state-makers. But even federalism was most significant because, through that mode of political organization, it was possible to hold together a great people, prepared, not in little communities, but in continent-wide proportions, to try the experiment of self-government on a scale hitherto unknown in the world. The arguments for American rights during the Revolutionary period are therefore not important solely or chiefly because they supported rebellion or irritated the complacent ministers in London to acts which precipitated war. Their importance lies in the fact that they foreshadowed federal order and the basis of the composite democratic state.

Even more than federal order and imperial organization came out of the contest with Britain, though we still have the events recounted to us as if even argument and political theory were of interest solely because they were used in bringing on the war; as if the thing to be accounted for is the cleavage of the English race, and not the making of America; as if the war was an incident in British imperial history, not an incident and a cause in the development of American life. Thus the philosophy of the Revolution, the world of ideas in which men lived and moved, are by this treatment made subordinate to battle, though battle was but the opportunity to make over ideas into working realities. Men, in fact, used the philosophy of Locke, Vattel, and the soldiers who had gathered around the camp-fires of Cromwell's Ironsides; they used the teachings of Milton and the Puritanic theories of divine command and unchanging right, not that they might fight; they fought that they might use their philosophy, and out of their fighting and thinking came principles and institutions. This is true, even if we confine our attention to the conscious purposes of men; it is all the more true when we remember that the thing of consequence to us is the emergence of constitutions and ideals out of the wreckage of tea boxes and above the noise of strife. If I were called upon to select a single fact or enterprise which more nearly than any other single thing embraced the significance of the American Revolution, I should select—not Saratoga or the French Alliance or even the Declaration of Independence—I should choose the formation of the Massachusetts constitution of 1780, and I should do so because that consti-

tution rested on the fully developed convention, the greatest institution of government which America has produced, the institution which answered, in itself, the problem of how men could make governments of their own free will, the problem which had troubled and perplexed philosophers and reformers from the time when men began to inquire whether man existed for government or government for man. Moreover, below and beyond the convention were active principles of individual right and justice which were fundamentally inherent in the social and life order of the day. We can more nearly understanding the woodsman, that genius of America, if we see how John Adams and Theophilus Parsons struggled with the task of fastening ideas in institutions. To suppose that these ideas are of the dead past, to treat of the idealistic foundations of authority as fit only for scientific study or for a cabinet of historical curios, is to lose the force of the permanent in American history, and to be blind to facts which are at this moment of towering significance amid the travail of the nations.

Anyone studying the Revolution patiently with eyes open for American achievement, with eyes open to what the contest really meant in our history, will be likely to think that the chiefest movement was not casting aside the chastening hand of the mother-country or the cutting of her apron strings. It was the movement that went on within the colony, simultaneously with the conflict of words and arms against Britain, and resulted in a change in the colony itself. For here again the war was an experience affecting character, as experiences are sure to affect character. It was an opportunity for the play of social forces which deeply modified the nature of the state and its people. We know much about the Revolution as a contest with Britain; we do not yet know enough of the Revolution within America. Primarily, then, navigation acts and port bills, battles and alliances, are intrinsically subordinate to the modification and enlargement of American life. Of this, as I have said, we know little enough. What we want to know more about is not the revolution of America but the experiences by which every colony was in part transformed because of the new opportunity for self-expression and for working out the forces within itself.

If we pass on to the early experiences in the decade or two after the adoption of the Constitution we find their meaning—and I venture to say their higher meaning—as experiences bearing upon the history of democratic government. Even the sore perplexity arising from diplomacy and trouble with Indians has its bearing on popular government, because all these trials reacted on authority

and tested the capacity for judgment and self-control; the mere fact that America lived through the first decades and surmounted her troubles is the important thing. But if one, admitting this fact, should put it aside as too obvious for comment, he will not fail to acknowledge that during the first decades, ideas of government and of popular participation in government were taking on new forms or finding institutional expression. He may not fail to admit it, and yet our history has not by any means been written with this fact uppermost in the writer's mind. We have for example often been told that political parties have always been distinguished by differing modes or principles of constitutional construction. Such assertions were made because the writer was dominated by the notion that the great primary question was not democracy, or even property, but union and national organization. I have no doubt that men were in part actuated consciously by certain beliefs and prejudices concerning nationalism and states' rights; but behind all this was something more. Even states' rights rested on more than local pride and prejudice. Constitutional doctrine was only a support or a weapon. Were it not for some of the books I read, I should suppose it quite unnecessary to assert a fact, which appears elementary, that class interests were involved in these early conflicts and that behind them all was the question whether men could and should govern themselves. Even the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions were more than a protest against overweening nationalism or Federalistic interpretation affecting the rights of the states as such, and it gives us new hold on the whole doctrine of the Resolutions, to read them not from the viewpoint of the Nullification of 1832 or the Secession of 1861, but as embodying in a new way the principles upon which the Revolution—not the Civil War—was fought. Jefferson was not first of all, through and through, a states'-rights man, a strict constructionist, a sympathizer with France, an ambitious leader of men; he was a frontiersman or half-frontiersman under whose blows had already fallen in his native state, primogeniture, entail, and the established church, and who in the nineteenth century formed a university to help in breaking the shackles that held the human mind. It appears not altogether needless even now, after the appearance of many histories and sundry biographies, to declare that Jeffersonism treated not as a spirit, but as a mode of constitutional interpretation or as a system of administration, is not Jeffersonism at all.

What shall we say of party organization, the formation of formidable vital institutions? We can and must say that here we have

a formulation of tremendous influence and significance. Only very recently has the party been seen in its true light as an instrument of government, begotten by the necessities and the opportunities in the popular or quasi-popular state. We see it now. We see that the vital thing was not the government but the association of men gathered into bodies with governments of their own, with determination to get possession of the machinery of administration and legislation. We see that what we call the government was a fortress to be seized by a successful army, and that the army embodied the force and the energy; the army was the thing of real life. But it is a striking illustration of our blindness, that, until something over a decade ago, almost nothing had been done to study the party as a governmental institution, and one intimately connected with the psychology of democracy.

Again, what shall we say of parties? Were they means of expressing popular desire or of molding and controlling it? What effect did party have on the developing character of the popular state? Plainly the problem and the tasks of democracy become more complex because of the multiplication of governments and the increasing rigidity of institutions, which were supposed, often falsely, to be responsive to demands of the people. The complicated nature of the whole situation is humorously presented by the formation of the Jeffersonian party: It was a national party formed to protect states' rights, as if the very spirit of nationalism permeating a party was not at war with localism; it was a highly complicated institution bent upon protecting and furthering individualism, as if individualism and institutionalism were not always in conflict and at daggers drawn; it was a democratic party furnished with organization by a leader and subjected to the command of a dynasty, anxious to control government and to advance its own interests, even when sincerely devoted to sentiment and the "cherishment of the people". The whole history of party machinery and of partizanship is a history of one striking aspect of democratic government; caucuses and platforms, conventions and direct primaries, leaders and bosses, all have their meaning in connection with the struggles for the realization of an ideal of self-government, and with the ideal, not always so consciously present, of a simple and just social order. We have commonly studied parties as if the main thing was the doctrine which they professed; we now see that we must study them with the knowledge that principles were often only *impedimenta*, and we wish to know how, in their constitutions, movements, tendencies, or essential character, they advanced or hindered the activities and quali-

ties of a people who would be and who thought they were self-governing and were winning and using opportunity for self-realization. A party therefore, as seen to-day, is an institution which was developed in the modern popular state for carrying opinions into government and putting men into office, and which, in the course of the decades, creating a character and a government of its own, operated in part at least to benumb individual thought, to control as well as gather public opinion and to hamper efforts for self-government. The individual and the mass in an effort to manage public affairs seem to get inextricably entangled in their own machinery and to be always making their own inhibitions by their very efforts to act. To understand the party we need once again to know the American psychology and to appreciate the spirit of an earnest, hurried, bewildered, confident, changing people.

The decades between the Revolution of 1800 and the surrender at Appomattox are of course full of complexity and I have neither the inclination nor the ability to translate the life of the time into definite terms of human effort bearing on the problem of the popular state, the state which started out believing it had a mission and which still thinks it stands for an idea and a principle. But here again things have a new and more real interest for me if I read them in the light of democracy—a changing and developing democracy, it is true, but a democracy believing more than ever before in itself and its destiny—or if I read them with much more in mind than slavery and civil war. The most important fact characteristically omitted or obscured by all but very recent historians was the development of the spirit of democracy, which radically modified our more formal institutions of government; this change in the spirit was of course the change of deepest import.

During a large portion of this so-called middle period of our history, there were various sorts of sectionalism affecting the activity and the character of the nation. We have been well and wisely taught that, especially in the fifty years preceding Lincoln's inauguration, the conflict of forces was by no means altogether between North and South; that all through our history East and West were realities; that American democracy was molded by the frontier and our character shaped by the opportunities of a continent. The rapid peopling of the Mississippi Valley and the general effect of westward expansion have been seen at something like their true value in the last twenty years, for it was only twenty-one years ago that the article on the "Significance of the Frontier" was read to this Association. It is just such grasping of facts in a way to disclose their spiritual

import that appears most desirable in any wide consideration of changing American civilization. We have come to see the general significance of East and West, two regions in the same body politic, one further advanced than the other in social complexity and industrial organization; we have come to see that this sectionalism had its effect on the essential character of America and marked the routes along which democracy moved. So perhaps the sectionalism which distinguished North from South, because they were in different stages or conditions of industrial and social order, may yet be studied as more than explanatory of war and of varying constitutional construction. Moreover we had, in fact, for fifty years, four or five sections—partly self-conscious; and until we know their economic and psychic reactions we cannot know American history.

Until very recent days, slavery and slave-owning were treated without special regard for the significance of the whole problem for us. Until long after the war, the North insisted on discussing slavery almost as an abstraction; the central and dominant thought was that slavery was inhuman and wrong. Well, so it was. I have no desire to underestimate the meaning of the institution or to belittle the contest between slavery and the great wave of humanitarianism which finally washed the curse away and made the black a freeman. One cannot stand unaffected as he traces the growth of a movement which ended in the final overthrow of a system and of ideas which were hoary with age when Moses stood beside the burning bush and heard the call of the Lord summoning him to lift His chosen people from bondage. And yet I think I am right in saying that we are now come to the point where we look upon the disappearance of American slavery as an incident in the general history of relationship between races, as part of the history of the problem which more than any other is troubling and arousing men the world over—seemingly the greatest single problem we know to-day if we look out over the world and include in our view Australia, South Africa, the Balkans, Russia, the United States, and India. But, though all this be true, though slavery as we see it in American history has its place in this wider field of world conditions, we are forced to see it here as it affected the growth and helped to form the character of the popular state. We may study, if we will, how American conditions affected race relationships; but as students of American history we are chiefly intent upon knowing how race relationships affected America. And as we study the whole matter, we see that slave-owning had a meaning not less important than slavery; certainly not less significant than the subjection of the blacks was the nature, purpose, and quality, inherent

in the developing character of the industry and its management; for slave-owning was a form of capitalism, and in its later phases a form of "big business", the first form or one of the first forms which, with determination, reached out to make policies and to control governments for its own advancement; it was an economic interest seeking to subordinate political authority and national ideals to its own ends.

The Civil War, though caused by slavery, involved more than union or disunion, free labor or slave; it meant more than a clash between theories of constitutional construction. During the days of actual conflict it had a deeper meaning to far-seeing men here and to men across the water ready to look upon all we did or thought as incidents in the life of a state which had held up to the world the idea of free government. The aristocrat in England instinctively sympathized with the South, not because he favored the crude primitive form of slavery in which the master owned the body of the toiler, nor because he disbelieved in the maxims or emotions of humanitarianism, nor yet because he cherished the "sacred right of revolution". The life and fortunes of a mighty democratic state were in the balance; discord and dismay, appearing to foretell the breakdown of the great republic, fortified and justified aristocratic distrust of popular government. Lincoln too was not misled; thus too he saw the conflict: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived or so dedicated can long endure." He had in mind of course the ideals of the nation, not the relationship between races; for no one knew better than he did that, four score and seven years before, men had not been dedicated to the extirpation of negro slavery. Such thoughts as these I hesitate to give utterance to, if they seem to reflect upon the sentiment of a section which was buoyed up by a certain nobility of motive and by a loftiness of purpose, and which still cherishes, and rightly cherishes, the memories of a struggle in which men died for what they believed right. The thing farthest from my mind is to throw obloquy on a section by any imputation of low motives. We have, I hope, passed by all that. The historian can hardly pass over the war, however, as if it meant nothing but the victory of a nationalistic interpretation of the Constitution or the freeing of the black men. Lincoln and aristocratic England could not have been wholly wrong when they considered the war a crisis in the experiment of democratic self-government.

Whether you agree with me in what I have just said or do not agree, you will, I think, be ready to look upon the Civil War as only one of the wars of aggregation and integration in the nineteenth century. The historian, writing of the world movements of the nineteenth century, must include our war as one of the wars making for national integrity and solidarity. Our great struggle meant the establishment of a united single and simplified nation, through which and in which the forces of modern industry and social order found new opportunity for development and strife. The very simplification, amplification, and unification resulting from the conflict, established conditions for later activity in every field of effort or of unconscious movement. Irrespective of motives, causes, and antecedent conditions, the war was itself causative. The war of aggregation rested on united effort and involved development, not only of governmental power, but of social and psychological concentration. The nation came out of it, despite loss and some demoralization, prepared for big unified undertakings. The foundation and progress of nation-wide commercial enterprises were, in part, the product of this vast effort to realize unity and to put forth force in the preservation of union. If men are what they do, if every man is the creature of his own works, then the northern army and the multitude behind it, with minds combined and centred on one common object, were day by day creating capacity for big things in the field of industry—big things which for a time at least overshadowed government, changed conditions of society and appeared to be ushering in a new feudalism which belied and belittled any ideals of equality, individualism, or democracy. It is a mere, well-recognized, truism to say that in Europe the struggle for national statehood created the social basis for a new intellectual and social order, and that, on the other hand, the changing order helped to bring on the struggle. Who would dare, for example, to speak of modern Germany with any show of intelligence, if he had no sense of the psychological effect of achieved nationalism? But in America we have not yet come to a full realization of the tremendous effect of a conflict for integral existence.

But even if the war had no such effect on the social psychology of the nation, this, beyond peradventure, is true: the twenty years after the war were taken up with discussion and argument about it, and men were but dimly conscious that the times loudly called for attention to much besides the things that had embittered their souls. Those twenty years, eventful almost beyond measure, full of movements which were of stupendous import in the life of America, were

studied but yesterday as if they were merely years that came after the war, years of political reconstruction, and not years of overmastering construction, the beginnings of modern industrial America, the America which is trying and testing anew the ambitions and principles of popular government and of social appreciation. We must in fact go back into the war for the beginning of the period, and there we find the act granting land for the western railroads looming up out of the mass of events which covered and obscured it; and in this we see something only less significant—if less dramatic and conclusive—than Vicksburg or Gettysburg. To us to-day, therefore, the war seems almost as important for the reason that men groped about in the mist and dust for a generation afterward, unmindful of what was going on about them and losing the spiritual significance of their own acts, as for the reason that the war had wrought the disappearance of slavery and the establishment of union. We have now begun to talk of industrial development, of the rise of gigantic industry, of factories and railroads and money, of the rise of all those problems which began with the Industrial Revolution but did not seriously begin with us till after the Civil War and which we have known fully and seen face to face for only a decade or two.

No man, I suppose, is thoroughly acquainted with what he is; his memory helps him to know himself. A nation is fortunate if it has even memory—which is history; yet society appears to recognize itself in a condition of existence only when it has already passed, or is just passing into a new stage. We need not speak, therefore, even of the present, with any assurance of knowledge; for, though we think we know what we are and whence we came, we are presumably opening for the future unexpected avenues of progress and throwing up obstacles now unseen. Certain it is that in the decades after the Civil War, we thought we were a nation which had overcome discord, had set up national unity, and was living in unified and secured power. In reality we were a people falling or fallen under the spell of a changing social order, destroying the frontier and the wilderness which had made us what we were and which we hardly knew till they were gone, entering upon phases of industrialism fraught with new perils, fastening chains upon ourselves by the corporate organization of parties, becoming victims of our own prosperity and increasing wealth, admitting in increasing number to our borders and trying to assimilate myriads of humans, whose race capacities and traditions were bound to complicate the problems of social and political movement and to modify the psychology of a nation hitherto comparatively uniform in ethnic composition.

The Fourteenth Amendment is looked on as a product of the war; it is classed by us as a part of so-called Reconstruction; in truth it is a document of immense importance in the history of the years which were filled with problems of industrial and social order unaffected by the old problems of suffrage and sectional difference. With a striking contradiction, it called in national unified power to protect individual right under government; based on individualistic thought, it was and is significant because, on and around it, gathered a mass of technical judicial decisions and a great horde of principles concerning police power, to all intents and purposes a new branch of public law. The lawyer has long ago forgotten that the amendment had anything to do with rebuilding a union of states, with war and disunion, or with blacks and ballots. To him it is an opportunity to test the validity of state legislation affecting corporate interests based on the principles of individualistic law. Nothing better than this illustrates how full of pitfalls and hazards is the course of democracy and how supremely difficult is the task of self-government. Just at the moment when society was moving away most markedly from conditions of individualism and entering upon a fuller recognition of itself, just when forces were assiduously at work creating new social claims and duties, just when there was coming to life a series of social forces which appeared to be individualizing society and socializing the individual, an amendment, founded on thinking which was already in part outgrown, was added to the organic law and was soon appealed to, not so much to protect the individual, as to shield the corporation which is an individual only in the eyes of the law.

We have, as I have already said, learned in considerable measure the spiritual significance of the frontier and the meaning of nature in the growth of America. Now that the frontier is gone, we see that, while the task of conquering the continent developed American character and quickened capacity, it did something more than establish individual self-reliance. If at one time nature, the wide prairies and the free forest, seemed to offer permanent assurance of individual right and the reality of individual freedom, they in fact furnished too the foundations for great fortunes and for gigantic undertakings eclipsing in their magnificence anything the world had ever known before. Thus again appear perplexing contradictions, conflicts between activities and actual results—nature stimulating individualism and creating masterful organization. If free government and democracy be shipwrecked in the conflict between classes, the historian of the future, looking back on American history, will see

the New World with one hand holding out opportunity and prompting men to independent thought and action, with the other lavishly offering room for colossal undertakings to be carried out only by combination and system; he will see the individual man using the resources of a virgin continent and storing up vast wealth, which constantly recreated and enlarged itself, until he was caught and held captive by the results of his own toil and submerged by his own product, and until inequality of industrial opportunity involved loss of political and social equality as well. He will also see, I fear, the decades of waste and destruction, affecting, deeply affecting the national spirit and capacity and interfering with what beyond peradventure must show itself if democracy survive—I mean economic efficiency in all forms of political activity. If democracy cannot husband resources, save life, accomplish much with little, give justice without prodigal expenditure of energy, unrelenting nature is fighting against ultimate realization of success. Beneath all the superstructure of even spiritual achievement for the masses of men rests economy—economy of physical and intellectual effort to secure justice and freedom for the spirit. Much that we do to-day at enormous expenditure of thought and social sympathy would not need to be done at all, if democracy were saving and *self-respecting*, looking out for its own needs, thoughtful, foreseeing, *self-governing*.

In speaking of American democracy I have thus far made no attempt to analyze the ideal or the fact into its elements, though in reality it is a composite. Behind all the variety and conflict, however, has rested the belief that men should have a chance and not be sifted or sorted on any artificial or traditional theory of worth; mass government has been thought desirable because it has been thought to make secure a sound and thoroughly natural basis of evaluation. Because we still harbor this sentimental belief, we look with foreboding on stratification and classification, which will either benumb personal effort or, by setting up group barriers, prevent free play of common sentiments and motives; for the groundwork of democratic equality is the common possession of human ideals.

We still talk in terms of old-time politics, and the terms may well be used if they carry with them recognition of new realities; and so I may use the term "new nationalism"; but I do not mean any theory of relationship between governments or any doctrine of unchecked constitutional construction—those things even now are of the past; for in reality what is a nation? No definition borrowed from ethnology or political science serves to answer the question, for nationality rests on more than blood or physiognomy or shapes of skulls;

there is no cephalic index of the spirit. A nation implies more than subjection to a government or than inclusion within geographical limits; it means, as Mazzini declared, a body of people united in a common duty toward the world; it involves, if it be real, the possession, the all-absorbing and the common possession, of ideals and beliefs. If the free state is, as Thiers once said, a moral being which thinks before it acts, the fully self-conscious nation is one permeated by certain hopes and purposes upon which it lives and to which it devotes its life. You cannot have a nation without a common property in things of the mind and the soul.

The new or the renewed nationalism, therefore, does not consist in breaking down state authority or overcoming geographic provincialism; it must have for its purpose the bigger American task of unifying society on principles of common idealism. We need to leave behind us the older terms, if freighted with their older meanings. Just as we had industrial nationality before we were aware of it and while we still spoke in legal phrases or in the words of political science, with our eyes fixed on a political system, on the relationship between geographic sections, and on classified governments, so we may have a denationalized society, while we cling blindly to our old phraseology and fill our minds with older needs. While we recognize that industry is no longer local and that, in government, sectional interests have been subjected to general control, we may be harboring spiritual and intellectual provincialism, a condition in which men and women in the same locality are divided into classes by impervious walls which belie real nationalism and already betoken disintegration. The old sectionalism was geographic; men were separated by state lines or by physiographic influences. The new sectionalism has itself continental dimensions; it sees no surveyor's lines or natural boundaries; in a way, though chiefly caused by industry, it is not even materialistic. The lines of the old nationalism ran outward through the people from one end of the land to the other; the newest must run from the top downward and from the bottom upward; it must make for real unity and human homogeneity. The old sectionalism was based on misunderstanding, on the failure of each section to understand the other; common understanding is as inconsistent with separateness as integration is with disintegration. The new sectionalism likewise rests on intellectual and spiritual misunderstanding; it exists because there is defective community of sentiment; and, if the nation is to be a nation, ideas must play freely up and down, through and through; without this interplay we may as well cast all our old words into the scrap heap;

for a community without the possession of a common domain is not a community at all.

In these last words, I am not pleading for socialism, for communism in physical properties, for anarchy, or for anything save nationalism in a real spiritual sense. Indeed, as a laborer in the field of history, I ought not, I suppose, to be pleading for anything; but I feel free to suppose that, as citizens as well as historians, we are interested in the vicissitudes of democracy and all its connotations, and one cannot help saying that for us now, the old-time squatter in the wilderness, that genius of American democracy, filled with his hopes and his purposes, looms larger than ever before, and we question with renewed interest how he fared in the decades gone by and how he changed as the wilderness gave place to farm, factory, and school, and as the social order about him lost its primitive simplicity and immediateness. The history of a popular state must be no other, at its inmost heart, than the story of the attempt to become and to remain a popular state.

ANDREW C. McLAUGHLIN.